



September 30, 2009

Welcome to my weekly email update - a brief summary of some of the more notable events from Washington, DC and the U.S. Senate during the last seven days. I hope you'll find this useful and informative.

IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM MUST BE STOPPED

The recent revelation that the government of Iran continues to actively and covertly pursue the acquisition of nuclear weapons is very disturbing. An Iran with nuclear weapons is a danger to the region and the world.

As a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I believe the United States must be firm with Iran and the world community and demonstrate this type of behavior will not be tolerated. The international community must unite to pressure Iran to halt its nuclear ambitions. Inspectors should be sent in immediately; there should be strong sanctions on Iran; and the program must be stopped.



REINING IN FEDERAL SPENDING

Last week the Senate voted on next year's funding for the Department of the Interior and related programs. I voted against this bill because it represented a 15 percent increase over the current year's budget. I also recently voted against the annual transportation and housing budget because it increased spending by 23 percent over the current year.

While there are good programs in these bills, both of these proposals represent huge spending increases at a time when Federal revenues are down 16 percent so far this year. I am very concerned about the Federal deficit and the National Debt and intend to focus a great amount of my

efforts during my Senate tenure addressing these issues. We cannot afford to spend our children and grandchildren into mounting and unsustainable debt.

EVERGLADES RESTORATION ADVANCES

Monday, I announced the Army Corps of Engineers took a huge step forward in advancing projects critical to the success of restoring the Everglades, Florida's one-of-a-kind ecosystem known to many as the River of Grass.

The projects will facilitate a more natural water flow from Lake Okeechobee to Florida Bay. This represents years of hard work and design efforts to achieve a healthy ecosystem that will benefit residents from Central to South Florida. Specifically, the project includes the construction of a one-mile bridge and the strengthening of surrounding roadwork for the Tamiami Trail. In addition to improving natural water flows into the Shark River Slough, the improvements will make the highway a better evacuation route in the event of hurricanes.

HEALTH CARE REFORM AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Last week, I met with several Floridians who are battling cancer and concerned about the ongoing health care reform debate. Ellen Stephenson from Winter Park, Carol Roberts from Merritt Island, and others came to discuss the current proposals and to express their concerns about ensuring accessible and affordable health care. I agree we need to make health care accessibility and availability a priority; no one should be forced to forgo care and treatment because they can't afford it.

As lawmakers debate changes to health care policy, we should not cut Medicare benefits to pay for proposed reforms. Rather, we should address the billions in waste, fraud and abuse already present in the Medicare and Medicaid systems. More than three million Floridians rely on Medicare and I'm committed to protecting this critically important health care program for our citizens.

As these important reforms are discussed in the coming weeks, I vow to work hard to represent your views. I encourage you to contact me with your thoughts.